

## **Students with dyslexia need early identification and appropriate interventions**

I am writing today in support of dyslexia legislation, Senate Bill 1054, but I am requesting additional supports be added to the bill. This legislation needs to ensure early identification and appropriate interventions for all public education students with dyslexia. One in five people have dyslexia, which varies in severity. Why are children not being diagnosed with dyslexia in the public school system? And why are they not being diagnosed early enough to make a positive difference before they fall too far behind their peers and can never fully catch up? There are proven evidence-based interventions that can remediate a dyslexic's reading, writing and spelling problems. Why aren't teachers trained in these methods? Why aren't these interventions being used in our public schools for those who so desperately need them?

Unfortunately I know all too well the negative implications of late identification and inappropriate interventions. Our son, who is currently a third grade student, is severely dyslexic. He attended a full-day 3 year old, four year old and kindergarten program at the CREC Reggio Amelia School of the Arts in Avon. He then attended and continues to attend Roaring Brook School in Avon for first, second and third grade. Here is an example of child that could have been diagnosed and remediated earlier. He has had all the signs of dyslexia since preschool.

As a preschooler he displayed early warning signs of dyslexia long before he could reading. This is because dyslexia can affect a variety of language skills that are the building blocks for reading. Red flags he had for dyslexia included: delayed language development with mispronunciation of words and articulation issues, trouble learning letters, numbers and colors, difficulty with rhymes and breaking words into their individual sounds, and he struggled with following directions especially with lengthy commands.

As a kindergartener he continued to display signs and symptoms consistent with dyslexia. He was unable learn which letters made which sounds, and therefore he had trouble breaking down or "decoding" words into their parts called phonemes. He learned to avoid reading at all costs or to just guess when forced to read. He had trouble with comprehension because it took him so long to read and laboriously decode. Even with attempting to read a short passage he would be unable to tell you its meaning or correctly answer questions about the passage. His fine motor skills were also poor and included an alternate grip pattern on his pencil (holds the pencil in his fist even today) and he had great difficulty with letter writing, spacing and size. He was unable to learn simple sight words such as "I", "a" and "the", and in fact today he still has great difficulty with these simple words.

As a first grader he continued to have difficulty with learning to decode and encode (or write) even simple CVC (constant- vowel- constant) words. He could not learn the many sight words that make reading easier for readers. He struggled to read simple text and misspelled simple words. He began to fall rapidly behind his peers. His

teacher was unaware why this was and told us to have patience, that it would just “click” and he would get it soon. We asked the school to test him and after testing the school psychologist assured us that he was very bright. When I questioned her about whether he had dyslexia, she denied that he could possibly be dyslexia.

That is when we needed to take matters into our own hands. At the end of first grade we paid out of pocket for an independent evaluation and found out not only was he dyslexic but that it was severe and complicated by a difficulty with rapid naming. His IQ was high average and his math skills with in the superior to high superior range. But his reading skills were only two to six percent compared to kids his own age. No wonder he was so frustrated... here we had a really smart kid with extreme difficulty reading.

In second grade he finally began receiving specialized services for his dyslexia. But it was not done with fidelity, nor enough intensity and his reading gap with other students just got bigger.

In third grade he is finally now getting highly specialized services for dyslexia remediation, with the Wilson Reading program, in a one on one setting for one hour a day, five days a week. He also gets speech therapy three hours a week over three school days. He misses all the “fun stuff” at school for these specialized services and feels school is “no fun.”

The fact is if he had gotten the needed proven effective services earlier he would not be so far behind his peers. He would not be so frustrated and have such a low self-esteem.

Please help all of our dyslexic students in Connecticut have a better experience than my son. These students need early identification and appropriate proven intensive remediation provided by high trained teachers.

Please help all dyslexic Connecticut students reach their full God given potential. Their lives, their future and even our society are dependent on it.